

What is Claimed is:

- 1) A method for financially subsidizing network components comprising:
 - a) combining a commercial message in a combined data stream that also contains a desired digital signal, the commercial message being buried in the combined data stream such that the combined data stream is the functional equivalent of the desired digital signal;
 - b) transmitting the combined data stream at a wireless local area network transmitter;
 - c) decoding the commercial message from the combined data stream at an adapter that can present the desired digital signal to an appliance;
 - d) obtaining revenue for distributing the commercial message; and
 - e) using the revenue to subsidize the price of at least one of the group consisting of the transmitter, the adapter, and the appliance.
- 2) A system for controlling access to a hidden data stream embedded in a combined data stream transmitted over a wireless local area network, the system comprising:
 - a) a receiving apparatus having
 - i) a receiver for receiving the transmitted combined data stream;
 - ii) a decoder that decodes the combined data stream into a main data stream and the hidden data stream;
 - iii) a status component that indicates whether the decoder operates to decode the hidden data stream from the combined data stream
 - b) a gateway having a transmitter for transmitting the combined data stream and for transmitting instructions to the receiving apparatus that changes

the status component, thereby controlling whether the decoder operates to decode the hidden data stream.

- 3) The system of claim 2), wherein the gateway contains a network interface, through which the gateway can receive directions to instruct the receiving apparatus to change status.
- 4) The system of claim 3), wherein the receiving apparatus has a unique address, and further wherein the directions received by the gateway refer to the unique address of the receiving apparatus, whereby the receiving apparatus responds only to instructions containing its address.
- 5) The system of claim 4), wherein the unique address of the receiving apparatus is unique throughout the world.
- 6) A system for controlling access to a hidden data stream buried within a combined data stream comprising:
 - a) an encoder for combining the hidden data stream with a main data stream into the combined data stream, the combined data stream operating as a functional equivalent of the main data stream; and
 - b) a plurality of local locations, each local location having
 - i) a gateway for transmitting a wireless local area network signal, the wireless signal containing the combined data stream and a control signal; and
 - ii) at least one appliance having an adapter for receiving the wireless signal, the adapter having
 - (1) a receiver for receiving the wireless signal containing the combined data stream;
 - (2) a decoder capable of decoding the combined data stream into the hidden data stream and the main data stream; and

(3) a status memory for determining whether the apparatus is in a first state where the received wireless signal is decoded into the hidden data stream and the main data stream, or is in a second state where the received wireless signal is presented to the appliance without decoding, the state of the status memory being controllable by the control signal.

- 7) The system of claim 6), wherein the control signal is found within the hidden data stream.
- 8) The system of claim 6), wherein each adapter has a unique address, and further wherein the control signal identifies the adapter for which it is intended via the unique address of the adapter.
- 9) The system of claim 6), wherein the main data stream is encrypted, and further wherein a decryption key needed to decrypt the main data stream is within the hidden data stream.
- 10) The system of claim 9), wherein the hidden data stream further contains instructions explaining how the decryption key can be used to decrypt the main data stream.
- 11) The system of claim 9), wherein the hidden data stream further contains instructions used to present an end user with an option to pay for access to the main channel, whereby the main data stream is not decrypted until the user elects to pay for access.
- 12) The system of claim 6), wherein the hidden data stream contains content that supplements content found on the main data stream.
- 13) The system of claim 6), wherein the hidden data stream contains control messaging information to control content found on the main data stream.
- 14) The system of claim 6), where the hidden data stream controls access to a feature of the appliance.

15) The system of claim 6), further comprising:

- c) a central authority in communication with each of the gateways, the central authority being capable of requesting that the gateways send a signal to one or more adapters to change their status memory between states.

16) The system of claim 15), wherein each adapter has a unique address, wherein the control signal identifies the adapter for which it is intended via the unique address of the adapter, and further wherein the central authority instructs the gateways to switch the state of at least one adapter identified by its unique address.

17) The system of claim 16), further comprising a remote source in communication with the gateways, the remote source providing the combined data stream to the gateways.

18) The system of claim 17), wherein the central authority does not authorize the gateways to access the hidden channel unless the remote source arranges payment to the central authority for such access.

19) A method for subsidizing the cost of wireless local area network components comprising:

- a) transmitting a combined data stream over a wireless local area network, the combined data stream having a main data stream and a hidden data stream, the hidden data stream being buried within the combined data stream such that the hidden data stream is not easily detectable within the combined data stream and such that the combined data stream is a functional equivalent of the main data stream;
- b) receiving the combined data stream at an appliance;
- c) selectively decoding the combined data stream at the appliance such that when the combined data stream is decoded, the hidden data stream is accessible and the main data stream is forwarded to the appliance, and

that when the combined data stream is not decoded the combined data stream is sent directly to the appliance and the hidden data stream is inaccessible;

- d) receiving revenue for allowing access to the hidden data stream at the appliance; and
- e) utilizing the revenue to subsidize the cost of the components used to transmit and receive the combined data stream.